

## PUBLIC SAFETY

# Poison-Proof Your Home

**More than 800,000 persons are accidentally poisoned each year in the United States. Of these nearly 40% are children under five years old, Faye Marley reports.**

► **POTENTIAL TRAGEDY** strikes more than 800,000 children and adults accidentally poisoned each year in the United States. Nearly 40%, or some 302,000, are children less than five years old. Yet all of these poisonings, many of them resulting in death, could have been prevented.

Fortunately, the number of deaths from poisoning is much smaller than the total number of poisonings. During 1959, the last year for which statistics are available, 1,661 individuals died of accidental poisoning; 456 of these were children under five years of age.

## Aspirin Poisoning

Aspirin has the dubious distinction of being one of the leading causes of accidental poisonings. Alcohol and barbiturates cause more poisonings, but some of these are not accidental.

To prevent these needless poisonings, here is how to poison-proof your home:

1. Store all medicines beyond the reach of children, preferably in locked cabinets.
2. Store household preparations such as lye, cleaning and polishing agents, soaps and kerosene in cabinets or closets that are out of reach and out of sight of children.
3. Always return products to safe storage places after use. Never leave potentially toxic products in plain view on tables, chairs, in pocketbooks within reach of children or in accessible drawers.
4. Never leave an open bottle or pill box in the presence of small children; however urgent the errand, put all common household products away before leaving a room where a young child is playing. The telephone, the doorbell, the cake in the oven can wait; your child can't.
5. When it is possible to obtain them, use bottles with safety caps which children cannot easily open.
6. Keep all household products in their original containers. Never put kerosene or spray solutions in milk bottles or soft drink containers.

Read the label each time medicine is taken; follow directions implicitly.

Take only those medicines prescribed for you; give others only those medicines prescribed for them and in the exact quantity prescribed. Give and take medicine only in a well-lighted room—never in the dark.

Children love to play in big boxes and empty bags. Better burn all material that has contained insecticides or has even been near materials that could be harmful.

Medical authorities in Tampa, Fla., were baffled by the deaths of two young children until it was discovered that they had been

swinging on a burlap bag saturated with a farm insecticide, parathion, which is a highly poisonous phosphate chemical. The children had found the bag in a shed that contained the poison and had absorbed enough through their skin to kill them.

Insecticide spilled on a porch floor proved fatal to a year-old child who crawled through it and got a lethal amount on his skin.

Aspirin and other medicines containing salicylic acid are frequent causes of poisoning and death of children. The three- and four-year-old child is particularly imitative and will take pills he sees his parents take. A three-year-old girl was killed by aspirin left on top of bedroom furniture in the bedroom of a sister who was ill.

The National Clearinghouse for Poison Control Centers of the U. S. Public Health Service in Washington has a file of 2,133 cases involving ingestion of internal medicines among children under five years of age who were followed up by home visits to find out the circumstances surrounding the poisoning. In 1,352, or 63.4%, of these cases the substance had not been returned to its customary place.

Henry L. Verhulst, secretary of the Clearinghouse, told SCIENCE SERVICE that there

are 470 poison control centers in U. S. hospitals. Montana and Vermont are the only states without centers, and Vermont has access to one close by in Dartmouth, N. H.

The poison control centers are open 24 hours a day to give information to doctors, hospitals and parents. Consult your local telephone directory for the number of your nearest center. Parents are urged to go immediately to the nearest hospital or doctor for treatment, however, because of the urgency of first aid.

## Poison Antidotes

A stomach pump must be used in many cases, although antidotes usually appear on the labels of poisons dangerous enough to require a skull and crossbones.

The poison control centers combine the functions of poison information and treatment centers. Necessary antidotes and equipment are readily available for emergency treatment.

On Feb. 1 of this year the Federal Hazardous Substances Labeling Act became fully effective. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), charged with its enforcement, has been working for a number of years with the medical profession and various chemical and manufacturing associations to get labels on the many potentially dangerous household articles not subject to provisions of existing laws.

Dr. Irvin Kerlan, chief of the research  
(Continued on p. 31)



**DON'T TOUCH**—Hazardous objects should be placed out of reach. "Don'ts" don't work when mothers are called to the telephone or the youngster slips out of sight to sample poison.

## Poison-Proof Your Home

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and reference branch, Bureau of Medicine, FDA, told SCIENCE SERVICE that there is a need for the new legislation because of the "great advances made in chemical technology" along with the present-day "do-it-yourself" urge.

"This is the first year that we had a control law for hazardous household products," Dr. Kerlan said, "although we have known for years that there was a problem."

The FDA estimates that 300,000 common trade items used in and around the household contain hazardous substances. Under the new Labeling Act, 5,000 or more firms are subject to inspection. In 1962, the FDA is allocating 104 positions and an estimated \$800,000 to protect consumers against hazardous household chemicals.

• Science News Letter, 82:23 July 14, 1962

### PUBLIC SAFETY

## Sled Devised to Test Auto Safety Belts

► A PIONEER in flight safety went sledding here today in the interest of safer driving for automobile drivers on earth.

Col. John Paul Stapp, USAF MC, whose rocket-powered sled rides at over 600 miles per hour, using safety restraining devices, have made it safer for men in space, demonstrated the life-saving importance of safety belts in a ride for the first time on a new sled that can simulate auto crash conditions at various driving speeds. Impact speeds of less than 60 miles per hour are responsible for 87% of injury-producing auto accidents. Over 80% of the injury-producing accidents in the city occur at speeds of less than 35 miles per hour.

### GENERAL SCIENCE

## News From Science Clubs

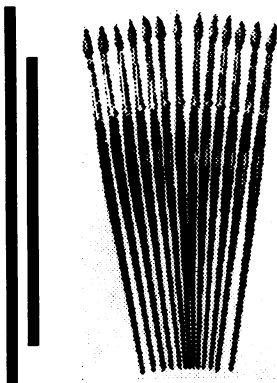
► A VARIETY of ideas for successful club programs have been reported to Science Clubs of America:

THE JUNIOR SCIENCE CLUB at Skyline School, Pittsburgh, Pa., has concentrated on promoting individual work, improving laboratory techniques and acquiring skills in the collection and preservation of biological specimens.

Panel discussions and field trips have been the most interesting programs of THE SCIENTIFIC SEARCHERS of St. Pius X High School, Houston, Texas.

THE SATURDAY SCIENCE-MATHEMATICS SEMINAR of the Ann Arbor Public Schools, Ann Arbor, Mich., used school laboratories for project work; had lectures by scientists from industry, colleges and universities; and held computer programming courses which were taught by university faculty members.

THE CHEMPHYBIOGENS of Amherst County High School, Amherst, Va., reported that the observation of National Science Youth Month, correspondence with science clubs in foreign countries, assem-



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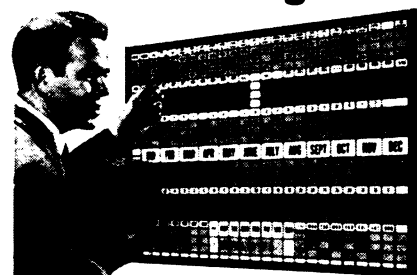
The sled, 18½ feet long, designed to test seat belts dynamically, has been instrumented so that forces can be measured on both human beings and life-like dummies as they ride the sled to a crash stop.

The instrumentation of a tri-axial accelerometer will be used on the test subject. Additional instrumentation of a linear measuring capacity, as well as string gauges, will be used on the restraining equipment and the seat. The data from these instruments will be recorded by oscillograph as well as by the ultra high-speed cameras. Analysis of this data and the performance of the equipment will thus be available for use for subsequent study.

Built by the Norair Division of Northrup Corp., the sled was introduced by the American Safety Equipment Corp. of New York, manufacturers of Hickok auto seat belts, at the Automotive Safety Foundation luncheon in honor of the Board of Directors of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The GFWC has campaigned to alert the public to the importance of auto-seat belts.

• Science News Letter, 82:31 July 14, 1962

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